

WASHINGTON AND LINCOLN: A COMPARATIVE STUDY.

BY LYMAN P. POWELL.

WASHINGTON'S BIRTHDAY has always lent distinction to the month of February. The observance lately of a Lincoln Birthday has given February the first place in every patriot's calendar. No university, no public school, no club, allows the 12th or 22d of February to pass unnoticed. The dailies and the weeklies from Boston to the Golden Gate all have somewhat to say about the men. In many a magazine, character studies receive the place and space the subjects merit. Washingtoniana and Lincolniana are exploited afresh every year, to satisfy the public eagerness for a new story of the two best-loved Americans. But none appear to have thought seriously of making a comparative study of the only two characters in our history whom critics of all schools are wont to pair together. The omission is the stranger in the presence of the obvious circumstance that Washington and Lincoln lend themselves readily to comparison and conspicuously to contrast.

Look back at them through the past, and they always seem, as well they may, the tallest, strongest oaks that ever grew on Western soil. How like they were! Steadfast and serene, patriotic and unpartisan, democratic and not demagogic, national and never sectional, independent and in no respect colonial. American through and through they were. Self-reliance never failed them in the hour of trial. When civilization bade them carry a message to Garcia they never hesitated,—they carried it. The odds were all against Washington those bleak and bloody days when, with consummate self-certainty, he crushed the Conway cabal. The odds seemed against Lincoln, too,—most advised and worst advised of all our presidents, because all men thought him at the first a mere provincial in need of counsel,—when he rejected, in 1861, without offense, but not without decision, Seward's audacious offer to become the power behind the throne which he completely filled.

They were masters of themselves. Calm and self-poised, they could possess their souls in patience. When Grant, looking at the Stuart portrait of the first American and quoting John Adams, remarked, "That old woodenhead made his fortune by keeping his mouth shut," perhaps even he did not quite appreciate the price that must be

paid for silence. Washington's temper, as Titanic as his person, was a sensitive point with his wife. Breakfasting one morning with the President and Mrs. Washington, General Lee remarked: "I saw your portrait the other day, but Stuart says you have a tremendous temper."

"Upon my word," said Mrs. Washington, coloring, "Mr. Stuart takes a great deal upon himself to make such a remark."

"But stay, my dear lady," said General Lee; "he added that the President has it under wonderful control."

With something like a smile, the President replied: "He is right."

Men marveled at the perfect self-control of Lincoln in the darkest days of the Civil War. Only Stanton, Dana, and another friend or two saw him break down now and then. Dr. Heman Dyer reports that in a moment of confidence Stanton once remarked to him: "Many a time did Mr. Lincoln come in after midnight in an agony of anxiety occasioned by dispatches he had received. He would throw himself at full length on the sofa and cry out: 'Stanton, these things will kill me! I shall go mad! I can't stand it!'"

At times, both Washington and Lincoln could talk much; but never, like your Cromwells or Napoleons, of themselves. Silent they habitually were, but not to mislead. They believed the truth was not always to be spoken; but they also believed that when there was imperative need to speak, nothing but the truth should be spoken. They were ill at the deceptive numbers of a Talleyrand. They had their heartaches and heartbreaks; but no sorrow ever made them sour, no grief ever made them bitter. They were never less than tender and sympathetic. Washington's grief at the death of a stepchild is unutterably touching, and Lincoln's tender words to Speed are exquisite beyond compare: "Speed, die when I may, I want it said of me by those who knew me best that I always plucked a thistle and planted a flower when I thought a flower would grow."

How modest they were! Nothing so embarrassed Washington as praise. When the Continental Congress was about to choose a general for the Revolution and the discussion was converging toward the only man to be considered

for such responsibility, John Adams, who was speaking, relates that "Mr. Washington, who happened to sit near the door, as soon as he heard me allude to him, from his usual modesty, darted into the library room." The debates with Douglas had already made Lincoln a national character when he earnestly requested an Illinois journal to mention him no more for President: "I must in candor say that I do not think myself fit for the Presidency."

Simple as was their religious faith, it was very real. We must give up, of course, the dear tradition that Washington was heard or overheard praying in the Valley Forge thicket,—there is no warrant for it. But nothing can take away the certainty that he was a religious man, large and liberal and loving. He believed devoutly in God; and, brought up an Anglican churchman, he was to the last a worshiper in the Episcopal Church, whose stately liturgy never failed to uplift and satisfy. Though Lincoln had no church connection, and possibly no articulate theology, his faith, like Washington's, was profound. God, eternity, prayer, were words of weight with him and never lightly used. When, just after Gettysburg, the wounded General Sickles asked him why he had been so sure of victory, Lincoln answered, with all the simplicity of a naïve child: "I will tell you if you never tell anybody. Before the battle, I went into my little room and got down on my knees and prayed to God as I had never prayed before. I told Him that this was His country and that this was His war, that we could not stand any more Chancellorsvilles or Fredericksburgs, and that if He would stand by me I would stand by Him; and He did, and I will. From that hour I had no fear about Gettysburg."

Real and striking as is the likeness between Washington and Lincoln, the contrast, too, is vital and vivid. As types in history, they seem in the large to be unlike. Gazing from a distance at these two tall, strong giants of the Western forest, the leafage of the one is first to catch the sight, the roitage of the other is of more significance. Henry Cabot Lodge and Woodrow Wilson to the contrary notwithstanding, the leaves of the one seem to reflect the autumnal tints of Europe. The roots of the other make deep down into new-world soil. For the shaping of the one, nature had to employ her largest old-world mold. For the other—

"Her old-world molds aside she threw,
And, choosing sweet clay from the breast
Of the unexhausted West,
With stuff untainted shaped a hero new."

The one was of such dignity as to enkindle reverence, of such stateliness as to inspire awe in

any heart. The other was so lank and so ungainly as to call out from Mr. Stanton—no joke-maker—the appellation, not intended wholly for a sobriquet, "The original gorilla." To imagine Washington as ungainly is about as difficult as to conjure up a graceful Lincoln from the days when two long, lean legs in shrunken buckskin breeches that lacked a few inches in bare ankle of reaching the stockings dangled in mid-air through the ceiling of an Illinois court-room to the election night of 1864, when the "original gorilla" sat with feet propped high on the White House mantel and shocked the fastidious Stanton by reading and enjoying the broad humor of Petroleum V. Nasby.

Of reverence, Washington received all that any man could wish. Lincoln had a little less; but to compensate, there was such love as never came even to him who was in his day first in the hearts of his countrymen. Back of the rude but never pointless jokes Lincoln loved even in his saddest hour to tell, the people saw a great soul all a-quiver with sympathy for the wounded on a hundred battlefields, and for the countless Rachels mourning for the almost more than countless children laid low on either side of Mason and Dixon's line. Their affection for him was not reasoned out, nor was it hemmed in by party lines. It was larger than party and greater than reason;—it was instinctive. There was no cant at home or in the field when the country called the President "Father Abraham;" for he was a father to the faithful, and unfaithful, too. Women hurried with their sorrows to "Father Abraham," men with their grievances. The mother prayed for a reprieve or pardon for her sleepy boy whose eyes would not stay open in the sentry-box, and the worn and weary soldier wanted his furlough. Lincoln denied himself to none; and while Stanton grumbled and demurred, he refused to few their wish. Thus, before the war had closed, the President's concerns, his hopes and his aims, his failure and success, were family affairs all over the broad land, and he himself became in a real sense a member of each family, bone of their bone, flesh of their flesh.

Nature and environment did everything for Washington, born of pedigree more than respectable, and brought up in the household of a well-bred English nobleman. For Lincoln, come of poor white trash, born as lowly as the Christ-child in a hovel, the extreme poverty and sordid destitution of his childhood lighted only by the unfailing smile of a kindly stepmother, nature and environment seemed to do nothing. Washington had the powerful lever of position with which to raise himself to consequence; Lincoln

had his boot-straps and the will to try them. In the face of neither, as you see it pictured, is there any sign of happiness; but while only gravity marks the face of one, the other is unutterably sorrowful. As you look at any of the later Lincoln pictures, you feel sure the cup of sorrow never passed him by till he had drained it even of its bitter dregs. Early hardships and chronic indigestion handicapped him. Some have hinted that after that November day in 1842 when he married Mary Todd he lost the chance of joy. To speak of that would be, perhaps, indelicate. I dare say only this,—that years before, Lincoln laid his heart in the grave with Ann Rutledge; and, in spite of all the charms of Mary Todd, it never had a resurrection day. Gloomy enough by nature, the baptism of that early sorrow deepened the darkness of his later days. Some comfort he found at last among his children; but as you look back upon those anxious White House days, you are likely to see in them a Laocoön in agony, yet always submitting in pathetic patience to his tragic destiny.

In the mature Washington, who at fourteen wrote wretched doggerel in which *durt* was made at any cost to rhyme with *heart*, there is seldom any mark of tender sentiment. Lincoln never outgrew the delicate sentiment of youth. He was not by any means a boy when he tarried the long night through by the grave of his first love and, heart-stricken, cried aloud: "I cannot bear to have the rain fall upon her." He was no longer young when he recited sadly to a friend who visited him in Washington the touching lines of Dr. Holmes:—

The mossy marbles rest
On the lips that he has prest
In their bloom;
And the name he loved to hear
Has been carved for many a year
On the tomb.

Washington was not entirely lacking in finesse. As early as 1776, he writes: "I have found it of importance and highly expedient to yield to many points in fact without seeming to have done it." Occasionally he played the politician. Now and then he did things for effect. On one occasion he offered Patrick Henry a position, knowing in advance that it would be refused. When the well-known revolutionist of France, Volney, asked him for a general letter of introduction to the American people, he dodged the dangerous issue raised by the request and sent back this reply:—

C. Volney
needs no recommendation from
Geo. Washington.

But one rarely thinks of Washington as tactful.

He was too masterful to make much use of tact. Lincoln was at times all tact. Men are still alive whom Lincoln managed for state reasons, while they never knew that they were being managed. Was the cabinet inharmonious? Lincoln could hold it together. Was the party discordant? Lincoln could either allay the discord or extract its sting. Through it all, he never put on a superior air; never lost his childlike sweetness of temper; never said a foolish thing or did a rash one; seldom or never proposed or gave assent to any plan that cannot stand the glare of history.

Among his intimates, Washington could talk earnestly, impressively, freely, now and then humorously, but he could not talk like Lincoln. "Old Abe" was original, fascinating, irresistible.

A soft Kentucky strain was in his voice,
And the Ohio's deeper boom was there,
With some wild accents of old Wabash days,
And winds of Illinois.

There was in Lincoln's conversation a strange mixture of mirth and melancholy that kept the listener ever oscillating uncertainly between side-splitting laughter and soul-drenching tears. One who saw Senator Depew with his matchless stories hold the latest Republican national convention in the hollow of his hand at the close of a long session, when delegates were eager to go home, can imagine Lincoln's power over men; but Senator Depew, with all his charm of manner, cannot take the place of Lincoln. For making the homeliest story point a moral or clinch an argument, we may, possibly, never again look upon the like of Lincoln. Take a random story, more pertinent, perhaps, because it came fresh from the lips of an old-time friend and antedates the Civil War by several years. Asked to speak on the tariff question, Lincoln answered, quietly:

I confess I have no very decided views on the question. A revenue we must have. In order to keep house, we must have breakfast, dinner, and supper; and this tariff business seems to me to be necessary to bring them. But yet there is something obscure about it. It reminds me of a fellow who came into a grocery store at Salem, where I once lived, and called for a picayune's worth of crackers. The clerk laid them out on the counter. After sitting a while, he said to the clerk: "I don't want these crackers; take them, and give me a glass of cider." The clerk put the crackers back into the box and handed the fellow the cider. After drinking, the fellow started for the door. "Here, Bill," called out the clerk, "pay me for your cider." "Why," said Bill, "I gave you the crackers for it." "Well, then, pay me for the crackers." "But I hain't had any," responded Bill. "That's so," said the clerk. "Well, clear out. It seems to me that I have lost a picayune somehow, but I can't make it out exactly." So, said Lincoln, it is with the tariff; somebody gets the picayune, but I don't exactly understand how.

In public speaking, Washington was subject to disheartening attacks of stage-fright, which he never overcame. When in 1758, in the Virginia House of Burgesses, he arose to express his appreciation of a compliment the House had paid him, he was so disconcerted that he could not articulate distinctly. He blushed and faltered and stuck, until the Speaker came to his relief. More than thirty years later, he was called upon to make the most important speech of his whole life. All New York gathered to see him take the oath of office as the first President of the United States. Then if ever he would have risen to the occasion; but the stage-fright came once more. Senator Maclay noted in his diary that "This great man was agitated and embarrassed more than ever he was by the leveled cannon or pointed musket." In the Virginia Legislature, in Congress, and in the Convention of 1787, Washington spoke only when there was extreme necessity. Of Washington and Franklin, Thomas Jefferson once remarked: "I never heard either of them speak ten minutes at a time, nor to any but the main point which was to decide the question. They laid their shoulders to the great points, knowing that the little ones would follow of themselves."

Though Washington was no orator Lincoln was. Eloquence was in his blood. He was up betimes in boyhood cultivating his extraordinary genius for public utterance, and while he was still in his teens he won success at corner groceries. Almost from the first, his speeches were models of simplicity and purity. They never lacked concision or precision. The shaft of thought was feathered by consummate art, and sent forth by tremendous moral force. He never took a mean advantage in debate; he was always fair. He never appealed to the passions of his audience. He always took Reason for his jury, and Conscience for his judge. Men sometimes said his speeches wanted feeling. There is surely feeling in these words of 1858: "Sometimes, in the excitement of speaking, I seem to see the end of slavery. I feel that the time is soon coming when the sun shall shine, the rain fall, on no man who shall go forth to unrequited toil. How this will come, when this will come, by whom it will come, I cannot tell; but that time will surely come." There was always feeling in his words, for feeling is conviction. There was something else—uncompromising fearlessness. When all America was winking at slavery and pretending to see no irrepressible conflict near at hand, Lincoln, against the protest of friends who had ambitions for him, spoke these words, which are significant, perhaps unique, in American oratory for their fearlessness as well as their precision. "A house

divided against itself cannot stand. I believe this government cannot endure permanently half slave and half free. I do not expect the Union to be dissolved—I do not expect the house to fall—but I do expect it will cease to be divided. It will be all one thing or all the other."

And then there was besides, as Richard Watson Gilder has discovered, a quaint, agreeable cadence, almost rhyme, lurking half concealed in some of Lincoln's finest phrases. Listen to the second Inaugural: "Fondly do we hope, fervently do we pray, that this mighty scourge of war may speedily pass away."

Unlike in certain qualities, our two supreme Americans were not unlike in their supreme achievements. There was no structural difference in the work they did; it was all of a piece. By the scale of a hemisphere they shaped their designs; but their work was larger than a hemisphere. Look upon it now as it lies spread out before you in the white light of world-wide criticism; it is of as noble dimensions as civilization itself. It matches the achievements of Alexander and Cæsar, Charlemagne and Alfred, Simon de Montfort and Cromwell. Nay, it is greater by as much as America, in prospect certainly, is greater than Greece or Rome, France or England. Europe herself admits the fact. The Iron Duke, speaking for the Old World, says: "I esteem Washington as perhaps the noblest character of modern times—possibly of all time." And an Italian scholar, spokesman for a world old before England was born, offers the stirring panegyric: "Lincoln stood higher in my estimation and love than all the Alexanders and Cæsars who have reddened the pages of history with their brilliant exploits."

The Old World is wont to make room grudgingly in her crowded Valhalla for New-World heroes of a century. Why does she welcome Washington and Lincoln with a cordiality as unusual as it is unexpected? Thereby hangs a tale, hinted at by many a writer of this generation past. The one object for which men in every age and every clime have toiled and bled and died is peace,—not of idleness, but of activity; not the peace of the time-server who gives what he must and gets all he can, but the peace of the strenuous man who asks for a free hand and a long day in which to give all he can for what he gets. As John Fiske hints, as Herbert Spencer tells us plainly, and as John Coleman Adams, writing some years ago in *The Century Magazine*, illustrates elaborately, civilization takes little time to register anything but man's struggles and man's battles for a man's chance to exercise all his powers of soul and mind and body in peace and safety. Activity against idleness, in order that peace

may not be shocked by anarchy,—this has been the powerful purpose of progress from the Stone Age to the Paris Exposition. Come to think of it, this and this alone gives significance to Alexander's fight near the Arbela. Cæsar is charged with hideous barbarity because he slew a million men and sold another million into slavery, but the cruel conquest of Gaul cleared the way for the civilization which at last brings peace.

At this moment in the drama, almost always tragic, of civilization, George Washington steps forth on the stage of history to his mission to establish peace in the New World by fighting for it. With the intuition of a world-hero, he apprehended the strange circumstances of the hour; he dipped into the future, he related the present to the future—the actual to the possible. In the midst of disunited colonies, a country in anarchy, an inefficient Congress, a disorganized and rebellious army, Washington singled out the central idea, and held it firmly, despite the Babel of discordant policies and treasonable conspiracies that would have swept him from the scene. He heard God say:

I am tired of kings,
I suffer them no more.

For a quarter of a century he moved before his struggling countrymen, their pillar of cloud by day, of fire by night. This was first and last his forward cry: "Let us raise a standard to which the wise and honest can repair; the event is in the hand of God." Through all the perils of the Revolution, through all the dangers of the critical period which succeeded, he led his murmuring people on to a union, in 1787, of thirteen independent sovereign States.

Against the nation's peace a combination by and by was formed. A mistaken section honestly believed that they could make two nations where Washington had established one, and still maintain the universal peace. In all the years that followed 1787 the South had stood still. She had closed her eyes to the signs of the times. She had failed to discern the national drift. From the Philadelphia Convention of 1787 to the Charleston Convention of 1860, the South was ever insisting upon what in all sincerity she considered the original interpretation of the Constitution, while the North was growing, stretching westward—making history, not arguing about it. Introspective, and from much brooding grown, perhaps, a trifle morbid, how could the South read aright the history of civilization? With eyes blurred by the grievance she thought the North had inflicted, how could she see that to secede was to recede?

The South had long unwittingly been tampering with the clock of progress; she had all but

stopped it, when the second supreme American came out of the West to say, Hands off!—to assure the world that peace could be preserved, and would at any cost. Politicians thought him an accident; he was, of course, a providence. Well-groomed and well-fed aristocrats sneered at the loose-jointed unknown from the Illinois prairies. Pharisees loitered in the temple of state, gossiped as of old about the new Messiah, and superciliously inquired, "How knoweth this man letters, having never learned?"—and the question was echoed and re-echoed by the smart set in many a Northern drawing-room. Southern trade held the whip over Congress and the Supreme Court alike. Florida, Alabama, Mississippi, and Louisiana were hurrying after South Carolina to fling themselves over the precipice, and Texas stood shivering on the brink. Many of the departments of government were in the hands of Southern sympathizers. The treasury was empty, public credit low. The arsenals had been ravaged. The army was but a little guard, distributed at distant posts; the navy was small and scattered. Northerners doubted Lincoln's ability; Southerners ridiculed his un-Virginian manners. Timid tongues were clamoring for peace at any price. The friends who loved him best were conspicuously uneasy, under the anxiety lest he should prove unequal to the task they had assigned him. Congress embarrassed him. His party deserted him. The cabinet gave him scant respect. Politicians schemed openly for his downfall. Everybody but Lincoln missed the real issue; and while all America was in a panic, the North crying, "Lo, here," and the South, "Lo, there," he took his place in the Pantheon of world-heroes by singling out of the confusion of the time the central idea, by quickly seizing it and firmly holding it until his grip relaxed in death. "My paramount object in this struggle is to save the Union, and is not either to save or destroy slavery," was his decisive answer to the impatient Greeley. And in saving the Union he saved for his country and the world at large the peace which Washington had established in the Western Hemisphere.

Our two supreme Americans were always a-making,—the one through a whole generation of public service; the other, it seemed to many who had followed his career with watchful eyes, by a terrible war, in just four years, from a local politician into the full maturity of the foremost statesman of his age. Devotion to duty and awful responsibility solemnized the face of the one; the other remained to the last genial and humorous, but the laugh grew less frequent and less boisterous; the sorrowful eyes looked out more sorrowfully from their cavernous depths;

the abstracted air deepened, as care and suffering did their fell work. And yet, as we look upon the Stuart portrait of Washington, painted four years before he counted the last feeble flickerings of his pulse, and upon the life-mask Clark Mills made of Lincoln two months before the fatal bullet sped too surely to its mark, we see

brooding over the gravity and self-sufficing strength of the one, and over the sadness and undaunted self-reliance of the other, that peace which the one established and the other saved for America and the world; and it was not the peace of death, but the peace which passeth understanding.

THE POSSIBLE ORIGIN OF A LINCOLN PHRASE.

BY GEORGE F. PARKER (LATE CONSUL AT BIRMINGHAM).

ALTHOUGH much has been written about President Lincoln's Gettysburg address, it may not be amiss, even at this late day, to cite an early authority for the phrase, "government of the people, by the people, and for the people." It is found on page 53 of a book bearing the title:—"Some Information Respecting America, collected by Thomas Cooper, late of Manchester. London: 1794." Most of its contents were reproduced in Volume III. of "An Historical, Geographical, Commercial, and Philosophical View of the American United States and of the European Settlements in America and the West Indies," a bulky but once popular compilation, in four volumes, by W. Winterbotham, published in London in 1795 and sold in the United States.

The extract referred to, entirely aside from its use of this phrase, is not devoid of interest as a description of political and social conditions. It runs as follows:

There is little fault to find with the government of America, either in principle or in practice: we have very few taxes to pay, and those of acknowledged necessity, and moderate in amount: we have no animosities about religion: it is a subject about which no questions are asked: we have few respecting political men or political measures: the present irritation in men's minds in Great Britain, and the discordant state of society on political accounts, is not known there. The government is the government of the people and *for* the people.

In Cooper's original book, the words "*of*" and "*for*" are printed in italics; in the pirated edition, they are in small capitals.

The author, Thomas Cooper, had an interesting and varied career, and deserves to be recalled as one of our many long forgotten worthies. Born in London, in 1759, he was educated at Oxford, and studied natural science, medicine, and law, traveling on circuit for many years in the practice of the latter profession. When the French Revolution was in progress, Cooper, being an active sympathizer with it, was sent to France with James Watt as a delegate from the demo-

cratic clubs of England. He was Girondist in sentiment, and because of this, was criticised with great severity by Edmund Burke in the House of Commons. He put his chemical studies to use as a calico bleacher in Manchester; failing in this business, he followed his friend, Dr. Priestley, to America, settling, in 1795, as a lawyer in Northumberland County, Pa. He attacked President Adams with great virulence, and so became one of the few victims of the sedition law, as he was tried by the notorious Judge Chase, convicted, fined \$400, and sentenced to six months' imprisonment.

After Jefferson and the Republicans attained power, Cooper became a judge in Pennsylvania, but was soon removed from office for "arbitrary conduct,"—a charge which seems to have been the outcome of a naturally overbearing temper. From 1811 to 1814, he was professor of chemistry in Dickinson College, at Carlisle; from 1816 to 1820, he held the same relation to the University of Pennsylvania; and from 1820 to 1834, he was president of the College of South Carolina, attaining distinction as an extreme advocate of the States' Rights doctrine during the nullification period. He died in Columbia, S. C., in 1841.

Remarkable for the extent of his knowledge, he was a materialist in philosophy and a free-thinker in religion. A voluminous writer on law, science, medicine, and political economy, it is not at all unlikely that his works—current during the first generation of this century—may have come to the notice of Lincoln as a young man; nor would it be surprising for him to give new currency, in almost its exact form, to a sentiment written seventy years before. If this supposition be correct, time will have brought in one of his revenges by preserving—through the utterance and massive influence of another—a single idea out of many put forth by a man who, beginning his long life as a revolutionist in England, ended it, in a distant clime, as the extreme advocate of States' Rights.